

# Parliamo

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AN ARRESTING STAND,  
MY MULTIPLA JOURNEY,  
REAR SUSPENSION  
and much, much more!

# FIAT 900T AMIGO/SHANGO

Hello all, I'm Martin and I am a new member to the club along with my wife Jill. We are both longtime Italiophiles and we have run Italian cars almost without exception for the last 40 years. Probably very similar to many of you reading this. The subject of this piece, a little FIAT camper van, might be of interest to you, and the story of how we bought it may also be useful for anyone looking to buy a vehicle in Italy. As I write this, the van is safely tucked away in our garage. I plan to do updates in the magazine as we work towards putting the van on the road.

## Why this van?

About 18 months ago we decided that we would like to buy a camper van as an interesting way of getting to and from our little holiday house in Emilia-Romagna, Italy. Flying is convenient but not very pleasant and definitely not travel in the true sense and also we liked the idea of having a van to travel around Italy and the UK. As we have a preference for small and characterful vehicles and with the roads being narrow around our Italian house, we decided that a FIAT 850 or 900T camper from the seventies would be ideal.

## The Search

It quickly became apparent that there are very few of these vans around and, continuing our search over the following year, that very few solid examples remain. Furthermore, people seem to hang onto them, so they are infrequently for sale. Internet searches revealed only two for sale in the UK over a 12 month period. A family emergency prevented us from viewing one near Chester and the other was a disappointment when we viewed it, needing a lot of bodywork remedial work and general tidying.

So, we broadened our search, hoping to find an example in a warmer and drier country. Immediately (this was June 2023) we found a promising example in Italy on the Italian website 'subito.it'. It had been unused for almost twenty years but always kept in a very dry (and enviably large) garage beneath the seller's home. Most of the interior was missing and some external parts had been removed. The missing interior didn't concern us because it wouldn't suit how we want to use the van. It also had very low mileage and crucially, the bodywork appeared to be very good.

So, what to do? Our Italian is ok for muddling through day to day situations but not for dealing with the vagaries of buying a 45 year old vehicle. Then of course the vehicle was also 1300 miles away (and we'd just returned from Italy - Sod's Law). Also, on 'subito.it' communication with sellers is dependant upon having an Italian mobile phone number. We needed someone in Italy to inspect the vehicle and act as a buyer on our behalf.

## Good to know

This is where our experience might be useful to anyone in a similar situation. A Google search returned ASMG Italia as a possible solution and, a few emails later it was obvious that Alan was the person we needed. He was clear about what he could do, what it would cost and the pitfalls we might encounter. A week later he had inspected the vehicle, taken over 200 high resolution photographs, gathered all the important information and produced a photographic and written report on it's condition. The report was comprehensive and accurate,

yet concise. Based on the report I was confident that I understood the true condition of the vehicle and we decided that it was ideal for us.

Alan has lived in Italy for some years with his Italian wife and speaks fluent Italian. This enabled him to fully understand the unusual circumstances around the sale of the vehicle and explain them to us. Suffice to say that without Alan we would have been lost. He guided us through the red tape in Italy, dealt with the vendor and ensured a proper receipt was supplied and helped us to get the documentation needed to register the vehicle in the UK.

Post sale, Alan arranged for his trusted workshop to prepare the vehicle ready for transportation to the UK and arranged said transport with an agent he has used many times and can rely on. It will come as no surprise that we strongly recommend ASMG Italia for any similar needs you may have. To top it off, he's a really nice bloke who's passionate about cars.

## UK Registration

One of the complications with the van was that the seller only had a photocopy of the Italian registration document, not the original. This was a potential problem because, according to the information on their website the DVLA demand originals. We postponed buying the van for about a month because we didn't want to ship it to the UK unless we were reasonably certain that we would be able to register it. I spoke with three different people at the DVLA on three separate calls and found them unable to say yes or no to the question; 'is the original Italian registration document essential for registration in the UK?' Understandably they are careful about what they say. However, the underlying message was that the more supporting evidence of the van's authenticity the better. With this in mind, Alan lined us up with FIAT's 'Centro Storico' in Italy who, from the chassis number, were able to provide a certificate stating that the van was manufactured in February 1978.

Also, I was aware that the DVLA respect the knowledge held within the membership of UK motor clubs and will consider letters from them supporting the identity of a vehicle with no registration document. So I rang Brian Stigant who many of you will know. Brian and Gill (Hague) from the club were very helpful and following a few emails, confirmed that James (Nicholson) could write a letter of authentication to support the application when the time comes.

## MoT

As I write this in early March, we haven't applied to register the van because I have yet to have it MoT tested. The main stumbling block is finding the time to work on the van and also, I need to source a pair of headlamps suitable for driving on the left. I believe 126 lamps also fit and have the side lamp included as per the 900t. Does anyone out there have a pair or even a single unit? At a pinch I could probably use rusty examples by swapping the reflector from a new LHD lamp which are readily available new and at low cost.

I'll do an update when there is more to say and hopefully me, Jill and the van will see you at events before too long.

Martin and Jill Lee